



## *Nutrition & African Dance: Synthesizing Health In A Whole New Way*

***Families of African American Ancestry Manifesting Our Excellence***

### **Families Targeted for Health Project**

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The nutrition section of the Department of Public Health has launched a unique health project, FAME (Families of African American Ancestry Manifesting Our Excellence). The purpose of the project is the weight reduction of African Americans. It is geared to low income families and children. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The goal of FAME is teaching healthy eating and exercise through African dance. The obesity rate is growing at alarming rates. The Journal of the American Medical Association published a report recently that stated research proves that life expectancy is shortened for youth and children who become obese early in life. Obesity increases the risk for some of the most life-threatening conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer.

In the 62nd District the percentile for obesity in African American children is at the top of the list, with 45% falling into the obese scale. As fast food replaces home cooking and portions increase, waistlines have kept in step with the increases. That includes the cities of San Bernardino and Rialto. The FAME group has several locations where they interact with the community bringing the good news that eating healthy does not mean sacrificing taste. However, the emphasis is on eating more fruits and vegetables. Research also indicates that African Americans fail to eat the required servings of fruits and vegetables that help to maintain healthy bodies.

The mind-set of the children can swing the pendulum in the opposite direction towards a healthier lifestyle. They are taking a form of exercise that teaches the rudiments of a forgotten culture and using that to instill pride in the children.

The Precinct Reporter recently met with Teslyn Henry, Chahn Chess and Donna Marino at the Public Health Department. They spoke in glowing terms of the classes that are being held, and especially the adult class. Parents are encouraged to bring their children and make it a family affair. The classes consist of warm-ups, stretching, and dance movements. They are also concerned about the snacks the children receive that continues the cycle of destruction. The community consultant is Rev. Bronica Martindale.

Although the goal is weight reduction, the group state they are more concerned about the day to day activities of the children than a stiff-necked emphasis on weight loss. The telephone number to contact the FAME team is (909) 387-0175.

They know that if they can get an individual motivated to leave the sofa and take the first step to maintaining a healthier lifestyle, everything else will fall into place.

The FAME team is currently teaching African American dance and nutrition at Waterman Gardens, Delmann Heights Community Center, Arts on 5th, and Johnson Hall. They are looking for sites in Rialto that offer shelter. In their own words the program is fun, educational, geared to family togetherness, and it's free!

